

March 11, 1999

**REP. SCHAKOWSKY JOINS HOUSE MEMBERS IN INTRODUCING THE HATE CRIMES PREVENTION ACT OF 1999**

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) today joined House members in introducing the Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 1999.

"This legislation will send a powerful message that the safety of all people is a priority and anyone who threatens that safety will face the consequences. As a member of Congress who represents one of the most diverse districts in the nation, I strongly believe that Congress must take immediate steps to pass this bill. Hate crimes, if left unchecked, not only victimize our citizens, but can tear at the fabric of our society," Rep. Schakowsky said.

The legislation, sponsored by Representative John Conyers (D-MI), ranking Democrat on the House Judiciary Committee, would permit federal prosecution of violence motivated by bias against a victim's sexual orientation, gender, or disability. It would also make it easier for federal law enforcement officials to investigate and prosecute cases of racial and religious violence.

State and local authorities currently prosecute the majority of hate crimes and will continue to do so under this legislation. This bill will increase federal jurisdiction to allow federal officials to assist state and local officials investigate and prosecute hate crimes. The bill will also provide states and local programs with grants designed to combat hate crimes committed by juveniles.

This bill, which was introduced last congress, was supported by members on both sides of the aisle, the administration, and many civil rights and law enforcement organizations. While serving in the Illinois State House, Representative Schakowsky was successful in strengthening state law dealing with hate crimes.

Similar legislation will be introduced in the Senate by Senator Edward Kennedy (D-MA).